GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:81
ANSWERED ON:09.03.2005
COMBATING CANCER
Reddy Shri Mekapati Rajamohan;Singh Shri Chandra Bhushan

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that India has the World's highest incidence of cancer of gall bladder, mouth and lower pharynx, breast cancer, etc. as appeared in the Hindu dated January 30, 2005;

(b) if so, the details of the facts reported therein;

(c) whether people of the country face the risk of contracting gastric cancer and damage to nervous and cardio vascular system due to dangerously high levels of nitrate in ground water in different States;

(d) whether the Government has sent any team for the investigation;

(e) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(f) the concrete steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for the prevention and treatment of cancer?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS)

(a)to(f): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 81 FOR 9TH MARCH, 2005

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) under National Cancer Registry Programme has developed an Atlas of Cancer in India based on the information collected for the year 2001-2002 from 105 collaborating centers across the country with a view to have an idea of the pattern of cancer in several areas of the country. According to the report, the incidence of different cancer is not uniform throughout the country. While cancer incidence in India as a whole is much lower in comparison to the incidence across the world , the incidence of cancers of mouth, tongue and gall bladder in the country is higher than those reported in the `Cancer Incidence of Five Continents` published by WHO in 2002 ,based on the data pertaining to 1993-97. As per the Atlas on the basis of ICMR`s population based cancer registry data, the highest incidence rates have been reported for the Cancer of Gall Bladder among the women in Delhi and the Cancer of Tongue and Mouth among the men in Bhopal. The highest rate of cancer of hypopharynx as reported from Aizwal is based on the inputs from the collaborative centers which include private hospitals as well.

As per the ICMR, it is estimated that at any given time, there are 2-2.5 million cancer patients in the country. There are about 7-9 lakh new cancer patients in the country. In order to control this problem, the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) was launched in 1975 with the objectives of prevention, early detection and treatment of cancer in the country. The strategies under the programme include awareness generation in the community for prevention and early detection of cancer, through District Cancer Control Programme and provision of comprehensive cancer treatment facilities across the country by way of supporting Regional Cancer Centres. Government Medical Colleges and Government Hospitals are also supported by development of Oncology Wings.

Regarding the level of nitrates in drinking water, it is stated that the level of various chemicals in ground water including the nitrates and the nitrites are being monitored by the Central Ground Water Board and Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission. The reports from the Central Ground Water Board suggest that the level of nitrates in ground water in certain states are indeed high. However, as per the WHO Guidelines of Drinking Water Quality (3rd Edn., Vol.1, Chapter 12, 2004), the weight of evidence is strongly against there being an association between nitrite and nitrate exposures in humans and the risk of cancer. A conclusive evidence is yet to be established as regards the relationship between nitrite/nitrate and neurological manifestations. There is slight protective effect of these ions on the cardiovascular systems.